# French Meadows Transportation Plan

### Existing Transportation System

The existing road system within the French Meadows Project area is comprised of approximately 100.6 miles of National Forest System (NFS) roads under the jurisdiction of the Tahoe National Forest. Additionally, there are about 2 miles of roads, dedicated to the operations of the Middle Fork American River French Meadows Dam, which are maintained by the Placer County Water Agency under their licensing agreement. There is an estimated 5 miles of roads on the private lands. A listing of the National Forest System Roads and their management attributes are available in the Project Record.

The lands within the project area are well accessed by the existing road system for the recreational, resource management activities, and private in-holdings that occur. Some smaller and minor isolated areas do lack road access that may be needed for management of the vegetation.

The primary access to the French Meadows Project is Forest Highway 96, Mosquito Ridge Road. This is a paved double lane road from the community of Foresthill for about 40 miles into the center of the project area. The Forest Service manages Mosquito Ridge Road as an arterial Maintenance Level 5 facility. And as such, it collects road maintenance deposits and surface replacement deposits from permitted and commercial users. The combination of the deposit rates of $1.40/mbf/mile and the distances hauled are an economic factor. A Forest Order specific to Mosquito Ridge Road puts permitting requirements on certain vehicle combinations that off-track more than five feet on a one hundred foot radius curve from Mile Post 1.5 to Mile Post 19.0. Vehicles that typically are subject to the permitting requirements are the lowbed trailers used to transport large logging and construction equipment and the chipvans used to haul biomass.

The main collector roads in the French Meadows Project area are; Road 42 Red Star Grade, Road 48 Chipmunk Ridge, Road 51 French Meadows, Road 68 Coyote Springs, and the gravel segment of Road 96 Mosquito Ridge Road. All of these roads in need of extensive maintenance and repairs. Encroaching vegetation, hazard trees, blocked culverts, plugged roadside ditches, gullies, loss of fine materials and aggregates from the road surface, failed dips along with damage to the shape of the road prism and the ability to disperse and shed water are common occurrences on all of these roads. Another common situation along these collector roads and higher standard local roads, such as road 42-02, is the interception of the sub-surface water table and interception and diversion of ephemeral flows.

The conditions found on the collector roads are more acute on the less maintained local roads that comprise the majority of the road system in the project area. Many of the culverts ranging in size from the smaller 18” in diameter to the medium diameter 48” culverts have become plugged or partially plugged. Resulting larger washouts and road failures can be found on road 42 and 42-10-04. Seasonal flows that have been diverted into the roads have caused the further damage of gully’s and fill slope erosion due to missing or failed waterbars. Many of the larger culverts, 48’ in diameter and up, are at risk of failure due to debris, log and boulder jams building up at their inlets.

The local roads that were placed in long term storage, Maintenance Level 1 status, have not been used for as long as thirty years in some areas. Brush and trees has become well re-established on a large portion of this system. Road prisms have lost their profile and in some cases the alignment is no longer discernible.

### Alternative 1, Proposed Action

### Roads and Trails

All of the roads used for the proposed vegetation management and forest product removal would be reconditioned as needed. That reconditioning consists of the routine maintenance and repairs required to restore the road to the design standards and the traffic use for which it was originally constructed. Those maintenance and repairs will be; clearing and removing encroaching vegetation, removing hazard trees, grading and shaping the road surface, replacing lost aggregate surfacing, cleaning culverts, inlets and ditches, repairing waterbars and dips, constructing new waterbars where needed and installing, repairing or replacing gates and barricades in alignment with the existing Road Management Objectives. In some situations, where the culvert failed because it is incapable of passing the channel load and debris, the culvert would be replaced with a rocked low water crossing.

The proposed action has two distinctly different uses and operating periods on the road system. One is the vegetation management activities that include access for mechanical thinning, mastication, reforestation and forest product removal. The other use is for under-burning and burning to dispose of activity fuels. The normal operating period guidelines generally govern the timing of the first set of proposed activities. The proposed burning utilizes a different set of roads in addition to many of the same used for the vegetation proposal, the common difference being the timing of use. The prescription window for successful burning will likely include the spring and fall when roads may still be wet and susceptible to damage from traffic.

Approximately 62.9 miles of roads would be reconditioned and/or maintained prior to, during, and after the implementation of the proposed vegetation activities. See Appendix 1 for the list of roads and lengths reconditioned. With the burning portion of the proposal, an additional 13.8 miles of roads are needed above the 62.9 miles for the vegetation proposal. These roads would also be reconditioned and/or maintained prior to, during, and after the implementation of the prescribed burning proposal. See the same Appendix 1 for the list and lengths of those roads.

Approximately 2.1 miles of short temporary spur roads would be constructed where forest products are planned for removal. Temporary roads would be decommissioned by soil de-compaction and blocking following completion of their use in the project. No new permanent road construction is proposed.

Access to the six existing water drafting locations would be maintained or reconditioned (such as rocking and barriers), and off-channel water holes would be maintained and monitored as needed for use.

Aligned with the road management objectives for this area (available in the Project Record), the following changes would be made to the Tahoe National Forest Transportation System:

1. Decommission approximately 4.5 miles of short roads or segments of 13 roads as shown in Table 2.2. These segments would be removed from the transportation system.
2. Close approximately 0.6 miles of National Forest System (NFS) road 51 to public wheeled motor vehicle travel at mile post 1.9 (at the NFS land and private property line) for resource protection and install a gate at the closure.
3. Close approximately 0.3 miles of NFS road 0068-010 to public wheeled motor vehicle travel for resource protection and install a gate at the closure.

Table 2.2 Roads identified for decommissioning[1]

| Road Number | Length | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 0042-004 | 0.18 | Currently an open road. Previous NEPA decision to decommission. |
| 0042-015 | 0.15 | Currently a closed road with well established vegetation. Redundant road for vegetation management |
| 0048-002 | 0.40 | Currently a closed road with well established vegetation on last 0.4 miles. Not a through route as shown on maps. |
| 0048-006-06 | 0.64 | Currently a closed road with well established vegetation |
| 0068-015 | 0.30 | Currently a closed road with well established vegetation |
| 0068-018 | 0.10 | Currently a short open road that is excess to forest management needs. |
| 0096-063-04 | 0.63 | Currently a closed road with well established vegetation. Previous NEPA decision to decommission. |
| 0096-063-04-02 | 0.60 | Currently a closed road with well established vegetation. Previous NEPA decision to decommission. |
| 0096-063-08-02 | 0.20 | Currently a closed road with well established vegetation. Previous NEPA decision to decommission. |
| 0096-087-01 | 0.30 | Currently a closed non-system road. |
| 0096-090 | 0.20 | Currently a closed road with well established vegetation. Last 0.2 miles located through wetlands. Does not access suitable landing locations. |
| 0096-108 | 0.42 | Currently a closed road with well established vegetation |
| 0096-110-06 | 0.40 | Currently an open road with encroaching vegetation. Previous NEPA decision to decommission. Unneeded perennial stream crossing at end. |
| Totals | 4.52 | |

[1]As indicated in the table, some roads within the project area have previous NEPA decisions to decommission although implementation has not yet occurred and are shown here for information.

Two non-motorized trails would be constructed and added to the Tahoe National Forest Trail System.

- An 18 to 24-inch wide sustainably designed non-motorized trail would be constructed using hand tools. The proposed approximately one-mile trail would connect the Talbot Trailhead to the existing approximately two-mile long Talbot Creek Trail, which leads upslope to Hodgson Flat and the Tevis Cup Trail. The proposed trail would also tie in to the Western States Trail (16E10) east of Talbot Creek, approximately one mile east of the Talbot Trailhead. The whole length of the Talbot Creek Trail would total approximately 3 miles, with the one-mile addition, and would be added to the National Forest System as a trail open for non-motorized use by the public. The proposed trail connector east of Talbot Creek is now within the new addition to the Granite Chief Wilderness.
- Mechanized equipment would be used to construct approximately 5 miles of four-foot-wide non-motorized trail on the south-southeast side of French Meadows Reservoir between the 96 road and closer to the lake than the existing campgrounds and road. A looped trail would be created with this route by going around the north portion of the lake and connect to the existing Poppy segment of the Western States Trail on the north side of French Meadows Reservoir near the McGuire boat ramp and picnic area. Barriers would be placed to keep motorized use off this trail system.

### Alternative 2, No Action

### Roads and Trails

Under the No Action alternative, none of the activities proposed under Alternative 1 would be implemented. The No Action alternative would not preclude activities that have already been approved in this area or those being planned as separate projects.

### Alternative 3

### Roads and Trails

The proposed operations, maintenance, reconditioning and changes of the National Forest System road with Alternative 3 are the same as proposed with Alternative 1 except as follows. The differences between the alternatives are the amount of NFR roads used to implement the vegetation management proposal and the under-burning proposal.

Because Alternative 3 has fewer acres of proposed vegetation treatments, slightly less (2.2 miles) of the road system is needed for access than needed for Alternative 1. About 60.6 miles of NFS roads would be recondition and maintained for access to the vegetation treatment areas for Alternative 3. See Appendix 1 for the list of roads and lengths.

Alternative 3 proposes to burn more acres than Alternative 1. Correspondingly, about 2.4 miles more of the road system would be used to access the prescribed burning areas than used in Alternative 1. About 16.2 miles of NFS roads would be recondition and maintained for burning access in addition to the 60.6 mile of roads utilized for vegetation treatments. See Appendix 1for the list of roads and lengths.

The Road Management Objectives, the roads proposed to be decommissioned and the roads proposed to be gated are the same with both Alternatives 1 and 3.

Two non-motorized trails would be constructed and added to the Tahoe National Forest Trail System.

- An 18 to 24-inch wide sustainably designed non-motorized trail would be constructed using hand tools. The proposed approximately one-mile trail would connect the Talbot Trailhead to the existing approximately two-mile long Talbot Creek Trail, which leads upslope to Hodgson Flat

and the Tevis Cup Trail. The proposed trail would also tie in to the Western States Trail (16E10) east of Talbot Creek, approximately one mile east of the Talbot Trailhead. The whole length of the Talbot Creek Trail would total approximately 3 miles, with the one-mile addition, and would be added to the National Forest System as a trail open for non-motorized use by the public. The proposed trail connector east of Talbot Creek is now within the new addition to the Granite Chief Wilderness.

- Mechanized equipment would be used to construct approximately 5 miles of four-foot-wide non-motorized trail on the south-southeast side of French Meadows Reservoir between the 96 road and closer to the lake than the existing campgrounds and road. A looped trail would be created with this route by going around the north portion of the lake and connect to the existing Poppy segment of the Western States Trail on the north side of French Meadows Reservoir near the McGuire boat ramp and picnic area. Barriers would be placed to keep motorized use off this trail system.